

REMARKS

OF

HON. JAMES B. EVERHART,

SENATOR FROM CHESTER COUNTY,

ON THE

Bill Making Appropriations for the Statues of Distinguished Pennsylvanians,

IN THE SENATE APRIL 3d.

The next bill in order was Senate bill No. 132, entitled An act making an appropriation for the statues of distinguished Pennsylvanians, in pursuance of an act of Assembly, approved April 18, 1877.

The bill was read at length the third time.

Mr. EVERHART. I ask unanimous consent to amend as follows

The amendment was read, as follows :

Strike out the last word of the sixth line in section first, and insert "Provided, That this contract be so modified that the statue of General Anthony Wayne be one of the two statues to be executed."

Mr. EVERHART. I offer this amendment with some reluctance, but, nevertheless, under a sense of justice. It is not intended to show any disrespect to the commission. They are gentlemen of distinction, of acknowledged intelligence and liberality of views. They have done their duty sincerely, but in this matter it is generally conceded that they made a mistake. The press and conversation have shown that public opinion has not confirmed their selections. They are directed by the law to report annual progress. They did not report this most important step in their progress, although it was taken last April when we were in session, and only reported it this session after they made the contract. It would have been courteous, and perhaps a proper compliance with the law, if they had deferred to the action of those for whom they acted. It would have caused no particular delay, because they only

made that contract three weeks before this session commenced. But they say, perhaps, that the contract is made, that it is too late for us to interfere at the only opportunity we have had, too late to do anything but to pay the money. I think that is an error. This contract, like all others, was made in accordance with existing law, and that law requires them to report progress, and to report progress means that the Legislature reserves the right to approve or to condemn that progress. All the parties, therefore, the artist and the commission, knew beforehand that this contract was subject to the discretion of the Legislature. It requires an appropriation from us in order to carry the contract out.

They were to report progress, not merely for form, because that would be frivolous, not merely for information, for that would be superfluous—but to report as auditors, committees and agents report, for the judgment of those whom they represent. Their action is inchoate, contingent, interlocutory, and incomplete without ours. They could not make it final because their powers are not absolute and independent, but derivative and subject to our supervision and control. They could not select against our will a man of renown, a native of the State, like John C. Calhoun, although according to them within the literal terms of the commission. This possible consequence is provided against by their qualified powers. Their duty was preparation, examination and selection, but

that was not to be irrevocable or irreversible. They were chosen for their fitness, to be sure, but they were not deemed irresponsible or infallible. And their labors, no odds how arduous or devoted, no odds what praise they command or what consideration they deserve, are not to be regarded as sacred or successful. It cannot be said, because they did not seek this duty, because it was beset with importunities and perplexities, because it has consumed time, patience and study, that therefore their work is beyond the reach of improvement or of change. Besides, this modification, if adopted, would not materially interfere with the contract, it would require but a difference of pose or expression, perhaps a slight compensation to the artist, and then the commission would comply with the legislative authority.

It is therefore the proper time to question the selections that have been made, and to rectify the error, if there be one. They were authorized to have two statues executed for the rotunda at Washington, of persons illustrious for historic renown, or distinguished revolutionary services, previous to or during that war. They selected Robert Fulton for his historic renown, and Peter Muhlenburg for distinguished revolutionary services. Both these gentlemen acquired their distinction and renown, not in this State, but in Virginia and New York. But, leaving that for the present, ought not each of these examples to be the most praiseworthy that Pennsylvania has produced?

Does Peter Muhlenburg's pre-eminence as a Pennsylvanian in that contest stand patent and expressed beyond cavil? Does he overshadow all his cotemporaries? He was a clergyman, a soldier and a politician. He served his country well. He was wise, just, brave and patriotic. But he was not so eminent in civil life as Penn, Franklin, Morris or Rittenhouse, or Rush. And while I would not disparage him, never until this occasion, has his military character been preferred to Wayne's. Although in many of the same engagements, he never emerged from them with a renown like his. Is it answered that his command was less? So then was his risk, and so should be his recompense. Is it said that his opportunities were small? That would be an obstacle to his distinction, not a reason for it. Is it said that his merits were not acknowledged? That calls in question the justice of Washington and the adjudication of history.

But all these suggestions imply the superior reputation of Wayne. He was especially the Pennsylvania soldier of the revolution. Born on her soil, trained in her schools, the trusted agent of Franklin, a member of the Provincial Assembly, a deputy to the Pennsylvania convention, one of the committee of public safety, raising a regiment for the army, invading Canada, and by the fortune of war suddenly in command of a defeated force, conducting the retreat with safety from Ticonderoga, promoted and commended for his ability, skirmishing with success about the heights of Middletown, resisting like a wall Kuyphausen's advance at Brandywine until sunset, renewing the action with ardor at Goshen, blazing like a fire through the fog and gloom of Germantown, collecting clothing while on leave of absence for the half naked troops, foraging in Jersey for provision to sustain the camp at Valley Forge, bursting like an avalanche through the British lines at Monmouth, scaling the terrific steep of Stony Point, one of the most brilliant achievements; quelling a mutiny of unpaid troops by his prudence, assaulting Cornwallis with advantage, at Green Springs with one-fifth of his number, defeating the British and Indians at Ogeechee, storming the redoubts at Yorktown, repulsing the savages Tories at Sharon, entering Savannah and Charlestown in triumph, and closing the war by receiving the allegiance of the disaffected and new titles for his services.

And then in the General Assembly, he was the first to oppose the test laws and the most influential in their repeal. He was among the first to advocate comprehensive inland navigation and the union of the Chesapeake and Delaware bays. He received a grateful gratuity of land in Georgia, was elected by her to Congress, made a member of the United States Constitutional Convention, appointed chief of the army. Again, in the field, he subdued the Indians, whose previous massacre of citizens and soldiers had filled the wide West with woe and terror. He returned to the seat of government and received a welcome which recalls the enthusiasm of those historic triumphs which swelled the shouting streets of ancient Rome. And after a half lifetime of public services, he died on duty. Such was Wayne. A man of neighborhood influences and household attractions and an absorbing love of country. A soldier by descent and genius, an oracle of discipline, a paragon of valor. Rigorous like

Frederick, inspiring attachment like Napoleon, with the dash of Ney, and the steadiness of MacDonald, pursuing with the zeal of Blucher, retreating with the care of Xenophon, generous in victory, and self denying in distress, he had all the requirements of a great captain.

With the ability to discern, to combine and distribute, to anticipate and execute; to avail himself of error, assistance, locality or time; to inspire his force with fury and his enemies with panic; to diminish the hostile advantage of position; to compensate for the inferiority of equipment or experience; to make the most of success and suffer the least from reverse; to be self possessed in the very ecstasy of strife; to be discreet in the midst of tumult; forbearing amidst provocation; decided in the midst of conflict, grasping all clues to victory, all hazards of defeat, all cares, all possibilities—when thoughts leap through centuries, and minutes compass the destinies of peoples, and principles and politics wait upon the winged words of command.

In trying predicaments, when weak minds are alarmed, and narrow ones confused, and strong ones doubt; when it is fatal to err and perilous to change, then rising with the necessity he seemed able to modify, postpone or precipitate the crisis. Thus was he among the first, the truest, the wisest and most illustrious of his time, the hero of many fields, laureled with many trophies, "a soldier fit to stand by Cæsar and give direction." His deeds have passed the crucible of criticism. They were not done in a corner, nor forgotten in a day nor were they common-place, nor shared always with others, but done in person or by his especial instance or order.

What better claims has any other to a guerdon such as this? What merits should he have shown to have made him worthy of this statue? Is it patriotism—that noble feeling, which next to Christian faith, seems the purest of human virtues, which founds, fosters, defends, and beautifies the State? Mark his course from his prime till death, giving the most zealous, prudent and unselfish devotion of energy and talent to the public cause, through all its troubles to the last. Is it generalship—that peculiar skill which trains and marshals men in masses for the red field of war? Here is disposition, movement, approach, attack, retreat, repulse, pursuit, all with such ingenious method, and fair results, as satisfied the requirements and progress of mili-

tary art. Is it courage—that steadfast quality, which gazes with unblenched eye upon the king of terrors? Here it is, so exalted and intense that it seemed a madness, became a proverb, reads like romance, recalls the days of chivalry—the feats of Paynim and of Paladin which set itself against vast odds, of numbers, drill and metal, and was ready, as was said, and seemed to charge into the very mouth of hell. Is it civic worth—that which in uncertain times settles rules of action and guides the common thought towards contingent wants and distant benefits? Mark his provident measures, his preparation of supplies and men for the forcible assertion of the common weal; and his legislative wisdom looking far ahead of the "ignorant present," to the needs of future wealth and commerce. Is it private character—that which gives to society its dearest decencies and graces? Here is a citizen without reproach, whose life was an example of probity and honor.

All of these things are abundantly established. By history written in different periods and in different places, by divers pens of enemies and friends, of foreigners and natives. By tradition, handed down through various families, associated with personal incidents and local scenes and battle relics, and interwoven with the literature, the songs and music of the land from then till now. By the confidence of Franklin, who esteemed him in the very morning of his promise and procured him an agency in a distant, important colonization scheme; and was afterwards joined with him in committee, for the public safety. By the constant friendship of Washington, who for nearly a score of years, had him by his side, or beneath his eye, or under his command, in bivouac and battle, in the darkest seasons and the bitterest trials; who relied upon him as an Æneas on Achates; who charged him with momentous duties; who commended him in public orders; who honored him with the chief command of the National army. By the repeated thanks of Congress, engrossed on record, and published to the country and the world. By the ever welcome voice of the chivalrous Fayette, speaking his praise from the shores of beautiful France. By the words of General Lee, deemed the wisest military critic of the day, pronouncing one of his exploits unparalleled in the past. By the united approbation of Greene and St. Clair, of Gates and Schuyler, the chief generals in the field; of Rush the eminent civilian, and

Morris the great financier. By the voluntary applause of the people of contemporaneous and current times. But this bill seems an effort to overturn this mountain of evidence, to reverse the verdict of generations, and remove the settled landmarks of history. It seems intended as an arbitrary decree to fix a posthumous precedence, to confuse our patriotic associations, to disparage the object of our affections, and to rob us of our knightliest hero. And for what? To substitute another whose deeds are not so conspicuous, whose character is not so popular, whose name is not so familiar, and who was eminent chiefly as a Virginian. For there he had his home, before and during the revolution. There he voted and debated in the House of Burgesses. There he preached the Gospel and left the pulpit for the field. And there he attained all his military titles and honors. He is not therefore within the purview of the law, for he was distinguished not as a Pennsylvanian, but as a citizen of Virginia.

But, Mr. President, it will be in vain to attempt to disturb the fame of Wayne, or supersede him in public opinion, or dim the impression of his services and virtues. His renown is fixed, and no specious indirection nor conventional afterthought can ignore or obscure it. You will prepare a more prominent niche for another one, in vain. For it is not in human authority, with its enactments and decisions, nor in artistic craft, with its Parian marble or Bavarian bronze, to equalize or alter or

transpose the merits of the dead. Every effort to put another in his place will be imputed to partiality or prejudice. And no explanation can refute this plausible inference. His absence will be more conspicuous than the other's obtrusive presence. Your preference will only be damaged by the contrast.

For these statues are not merely to adorn a corridor, or encourage art, or for a local purpose, or a transient show, but for the permanent glory of the State. They are to perpetuate in stone or bronze her dearest offspring; her love and pride; her Cornelian jewels. They are to represent the best types of her early heroism, patriotism and genius—those who have achieved the most for her institutions, her progress and her renown—such as in the unchristian ages, would have been made idols, kings or gods—who would have had tombs in the Ceramicus—victorious arches across the Imperial ways—colossal figures in the mighty avenues of Karnak.

It is meet, therefore, that we should not select for this great gallery of the nation men of uncertain citizenship or inferior claims.

But when hereafter ambitious youth shall seek this Pantheon of patriots, for inspiration and example, let them behold his form, who was a leading spirit in the people's struggle, and who added the peerless feat of Stony Point towards their immortal triumph.